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ABSTRACT

Intended for parents, this booklet offers information about how reading instruction is changing and is now only one part of an integrated language arts curriculum. The booklet urges parents and educators to work together to help meet students needs. Section titles include: Important Facts About Integrated Language Arts; What to Expect in Your Child's Language Arts Class; Helping Your Child at Home; Planning for Your Child's Success in Integrated Language Arts; and Additional Sources of Help and Information. (MG)

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The Changing Language Arts Curriculum

A Booklet for Parents

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The Changing Language Arts Curriculum

A Booklet for Parents

Prepared under the direction of the
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Division
Francie Alexander, Director

Office of Humanities
Curriculum Services
Tomás Lopez, Director

Language Arts and Foreign Languages Unit
Shirley Hazlett, Manager
and the
Curriculum Services Unit
Zelma Solomon, Manager

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The principal writers were Katie Bloom, Teacher, Grand Oaks Elementary School, San Juan Unified School District, Carmichael; and Penny Schott, Teacher, Peck Elementary School, San Juan Unified School District, Carmichael.

The booklet was edited for publication by Mirko Strazicich of the Bureau of Publications and prepared for photo-offset production by Bureau staff members. Paul Lee designed the cover and layout, and Cheryl Shawver McDonald designed the artwork.

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A Message to Parents from California's Superintendent of Public Instruction

Reading instruction in our schools is changing. Changes are taking place not only in *what* students learn but also in *how* they learn. Reading is now only one part of an integrated language arts curriculum that teaches listening, speaking, reading, and writing as one discipline rather than as separate subjects. As part of this new approach, educators and parents should work together to help students:

1. See the beauty and power of reading and writing so that the students will want to learn more.
2. Use reading to make sense of the world. In this way students will better understand what is happening around them.
3. Clarify and communicate cultural values by sharing fine literature with others.
4. Apply language arts skills to real-life situations, such as:
   a. Reading an important newspaper article
   b. Writing a letter to a friend or relative
   c. Giving a persuasive talk to a peer group
   d. Listening critically and objectively to a radio advertisement

You are a vital part of your child's success, and this booklet has been designed to help you. The information contained in this booklet is divided into four sections:

1. Important Facts About Integrated Language Arts
2. What to Expect in Your Child's Integrated Language Arts Class
3. Helping Your Child at Home
4. Planning for Your Child's Success in Integrated Language Arts

Sources of additional help and information are included at the end of this booklet.

Important Facts About Integrated Language Arts

All students need to learn to read and write.

Students must be prepared for jobs in the future that will have a great emphasis on communication skills. An effective government also depends on literate citizens.

Reading is more than "sounding out" words.

Reading is a process of making meaning from the text and adding it to the knowledge the reader already has on the topic. The more knowledge students have from daily experiences, the easier it will be for them to relate to new concepts at school.

Skilled reading is fluent.

Students must master reading so that it is automatic and so that attention can be paid to meaning rather than to isolated words. Reading for pleasure at home helps to develop this fluency.

Skilled reading and writing are motivated.

The use of literature of quality in the classroom and at home is essential in motivating students to become good readers and writers. The school and community libraries are wonderful, free sources of motivation for your children.

Skilled reading and writing are strategic.

Good readers know how to change the way they read for the different types of reading material and for the different reasons they have for reading it. Good readers read quickly for pleasure but know that in reading technical information for an examination, for example, they may need to read more slowly and to stop and review

frequently. Similarly, good writers vary their style, depending on their audience and their purpose for writing.

Reading and writing are lifelong activities.

One's reading and writing skills must be continually developed and refined. Let your children see you reading and writing at home so they will more easily see that the skills they are learning now will be useful and necessary far beyond the classroom.

What to Expect in Your Child's Language Arts Class

Students should be:	*Because:*
Actively involved in a literature-based program	A literature-based program encourages children to become enthusiastic about reading and exposes all students to significant literary works. Attention to values in literature reflects the real dilemmas faced by all human beings and should be represented by traditional and modern classics across all the disciplines.
Guided through a variety of thinking processes as they study content and focus on ethical issues	Making the students' responses to literature meaningful requires the knowledge that there may not be one single correct interpretation of a text. Different points of view are to be expected. Various questioning strategies are used to enhance critical thinking skills.
Involved in the integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing and learning these language skills in meaningful contexts	It cannot be emphasized too strongly that all of the uses of language—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—are interrelated and mutually supportive. It follows, therefore, that the most beneficial instruction is that which involves students in activities, both individual and group, and which emphasizes the integration of all the language processes.
Using a writing program that includes attention to the various stages of the writing process	Opportunities to write have been found to contribute to knowledge of how written language and oral language are related and to growth in phonics, spelling, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension.

Instruction in writing as a process, from prewriting through postwriting, enhances the student's achievement of these skills.

Involved in phonics instruction in the early grades

Research has confirmed that young readers can be assisted by knowledge about the relationship of sounds to letters; this is known as phonics. Phonics instruction is one part of a complete language arts program. It is best used as a strategy for helping students to understand words read as part of the larger process of understanding the meaning of literature read.

As students proceed through the grades, their understanding of literature is developed and enhanced through their own experiences. Consequently, the activities and materials should be appropriate for your child's developmental level. The following activities, arranged according to grade level, include those appropriate for students in kindergarten through grade twelve:

Kindergarten Through Grade Three

In the primary grades children encounter literature mainly as stories told to them, read to them, or performed for them. This is an ideal time to engage in the time-honored tradition of storytelling. This early exposure to oral literature will increase the children's attention span, listening ability, vocabulary, ability to visualize, and general cultural knowledge.

In the primary grades literature also plays a key part in the early practice of reading itself. Favorite stories can form a natural bridge to reading for the beginning student.

Phonics, one of several means for assisting readers in understanding works read, provides sound symbol cues useful in decoding. Phonics is taught directly, and students are assisted in generalizing sound

symbol associations they see in works read. Phonics is taught as simply as possible and in meaningful context.

An effective program for the primary grades includes all the major literary forms: Mother Goose rhymes, traditional folktales, and animal stories. Fictional as well as nonfictional stories are included. The students discuss the materials they have studied and dictate or write about their reactions. Undoubtedly, however, the most significant goal of the literature program in the early years is to show youngsters that books can be a great source of intense enjoyment.

Grades Three Through Six

By the time students have reached the upper elementary grades, the majority of them have acquired the rudiments of reading and are eager to read to expand their understanding of the world. The students read in content areas; for example, historical novels and biographies of scientists. It is particularly important in these years that students read imaginative and thought-provoking selections to take advantage of their natural curiosity and to make certain this interest is sustained and rewarded. Compared with the selections in the primary grades, the literature choices for grades three through six should be noticeably more sophisticated. Selections might include plays, scripts, poetry, prose fiction, adventure stories, tall tales, animal stories, novels, biographies, and autobiographies. The students use the writing process to develop responses to the works they have read. They learn grammar and the conventions of English. And they become more proficient spellers through

the process of editing their own written responses. The school or public library is a good source for selecting books of great personal interest.

Grades Six Through Eight

During the period of adolescence, students are on the threshold of the adult world—childlike in their outlook one moment and impatient for more responsibility and independence the next. They are going through an impressionable time of life and can greatly benefit from the wisdom and experience of our best literature. Students at this age read poetry, short stories, novels, and scripts with greater emphasis on interpretation and in-depth analysis than in previous grades. They can incorporate the conventions of English as they write in a variety of modes of discourse. Some students delight in sharing their own poetry and stories with one another.

Grades Eight Through Twelve

The high school literature program should help promote a quest for values. High school students have enough command of language and life experience to benefit from the subtle and morally demanding themes of mature literature. Challenging novels, drama, poetry, and nonfiction can be read now.

During these years the students will read from anthologies as well as paperback books. Their written work should begin to reflect complex grammatical structures and effective stylistic features modeled in the literature they are reading. In addition, the students use the school and public library to research areas of interest.

Helping Your Child at Home

Talk with your child about shared experiences.

Parents can deepen their children's understanding of the world by talking with them about the experiences and memories they have shared. Parents should talk with children about their studies, homework, and school experiences. The experiences should be varied, as a variety of experiences help children develop different sorts of knowledge. These experiences should be surrounded by talk. Communicative parents give children opportunities to talk too, encouraging their children to think and talk about the world around them. Language frames the world that the child knows; the richer the language, the richer the child's world.

Listen to your child read to you.

Children begin to see themselves as readers when they are provided opportunities to share books with others. Invite your child to share favorite library and personal books with you by reading them aloud to you. Talking with your child about the book will increase his or her understanding of the book.

Read aloud with your child.

Giving your child direct contact with books by reading stories aloud is a very important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading. There is more to reading to children than just saying the words. Reading aloud is a social event, a shared activity in which children are encouraged to ask questions and talk about a story. Children of all ages benefit from hearing stories read aloud.

Have your child see you read.

Children get the impression that reading is valuable when they see their parents enjoying and benefiting from reading. When parents read newspapers, magazines, and books at home and check out library books for themselves as well as for the children, they set a powerful example and emphasize the importance and pleasure of reading. A family reading hour, when parents can read the newspaper or their favorite magazine or novel and children can read their own books, works well in many homes. In addition to giving everyone a time to read, a family reading hour underscores the importance you attach to reading. Because you value reading, your children can learn to do the same.

Show the importance and use of writing at home.

When children are read to, they almost automatically learn about written language as well. Providing opportunities and purposes for writing will enhance your child's interest in writing. Ideas to suggest for writing activities include journal or diary writing, shopping lists, story writing, and thank-you notes.

Monitor your child's television viewing.

Establish guidelines for the amount of television that is watched and the types of shows that are viewed. Whenever possible, watch the programs with your children. When parents and their children watch television together, discussion can take place on what has been seen. In this way children can better understand the programs and parents have the opportunity to discuss family values as they relate to television experiences.

Encourage your child in supporting his or her reading, writing, speaking, and listening habits.

Being supportive and encouraging in your child's reading and writing development is a vital role for parents. Parents need to show their child that they believe education is important, to encourage good work and study habits, and to praise success whenever possible.

Introduce your child to materials available from the library.

Helping your child obtain and use a library card can result in many benefits. You convey to the child the conviction that printed and media materials available from the library are valuable and provide access to a variety of resources.

Planning for Your Child's Success in Integrated Language Arts

Visit your child's classroom and participate in school events.

A visit to your child's classroom will let you see how your child is developing his or her language arts capabilities. In addition, many teachers welcome parents as volunteers on a regular basis or for special projects.

Many schools have special events related to the language arts areas. Reading and writing contests, storytelling, poetry recitation, and dramatic presentations are only a few of the activities that may be available at your child's school.

Parents often are invited to participate in committees to plan or monitor a school's instructional program. A PTA group may hold a fund-raising event to purchase language arts materials for classrooms or the school library.

Attend parent involvement workshops on the language arts.

Participate in language arts workshops offered at your child's school through the school site council, PTA, or other parent groups. Request training in areas of interest to you, such as locating children's literature, using the library, and discussing books with your child.

Ask for and attend parent-teacher conferences.

Parent-teacher conferences provide an opportunity to plan what is best for your child. (Sometimes it is beneficial for your child to be part of the conference.) Share

information with the teacher about your child's understanding and special interests. Discuss ideas and suggestions with the teacher and other parents. Make plans as to what each of you will do to help your child succeed in language arts.

Encourage your child to take courses in the language arts areas.

Jobs today require greater capabilities than ever before in reading, writing, and communicating. In the future these skills will become even more important.

To enter either the California State University system or the University of California system, students must complete four years of English courses in high school.

Additional Sources of Help and Information

Your child's teacher often is the first source of help and information. The school library, public libraries, and bookstores are other sources. Your child's school also may have a reading specialist who can be of assistance. Books and pamphlets that may be helpful include the following:

First Teachers. Washington, D.C.: Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy (pamphlet).

Help Your Child Get the Most Out of Homework. Chicago: National PTA, 1988.

Kaye, Peggy. *Games for Reading: Playful Ways to Help Your Child Read.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

Larrick, Nancy. *A Parent's Guide to Children's Reading* (Fifth revised edition). Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1983.

Trelease, Jim. *The New Read-Aloud Handbook.* New York: Penguin Books, Inc., 1989.

The following pamphlets are available at no charge from the International Reading Association, P.O. Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139:

Sloan, Glenna D. *Good Books Make Reading Fun for Your Child.*

Erickson, A. *Studying: A Key to Success . . . Ways Parents Can Help.*

Micklos, J., Jr. *Summer Reading Is Important; You Can Encourage Your Child to Read;* and *Your Home Is Your Child's First School.*

For additional information contact the Language Arts and Foreign Languages Unit, California State Department of Education, P.O. Box 944272, Sacramento, CA 94244-2720; telephone (916) 322-4981.

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0-8011-0831-4	Recommended Literature, Grades 9—12 (1989)	4.50
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0-8011-0745-8	Recommended Readings in Literature, K—8, Annotated Edition (1988)	4.50
0-8011-0738-5	Secondary Textbook Review: English (1988)	9.25
0-8011-0805-5	Visual and Performing Arts Framework for California Public Schools (1989)	6.00

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